

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07

OMB-01 COME-00 FMC-01 FEA-01 /064 W

----- 112575

R 040935Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE AUSHDC 7894

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAHJIBAD

AMCONSUL CACLUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 4518

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, IN, BG

SUBJECT: INDO-BANGLADESH MARITIME TALKS

1. BANGLADESH FONMIN KAMAL HOSSIAN LEFT DELHI APRIL 2 AFTER THREE INCONCLUSIVE DAYS OF TALKS WITH SENIOR INDIAN OFFICIALS (INCLUDING SEVERAL MEETINGS WITH FONMIN CHAVAN, PLANNING COMMISSION VICE-CHAIRMAN P.N. HAKSAR, AND THE PRIME MINISTER). INDIAN OFFICIAL SOURCES TOLD THE PRESS THAT DIFFERENCES HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLY NARROWED AND THAT A SOLUTION WOULD BE FOUND SOON.

2. WE SPOKE BRIEFLY APRIL 3 WITH FORMER INDIAN DCM IN DACCA, MANI DIKSHIT, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE DISCUSSIONS, AND EMERGE WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT WHILE SOME DUST HAS INDEED BEEN CLEARED AWAY, THE BASIC POLITICAL PROBLEM REMAINS UNRESOLVED. DIKSHIT SAID THE BANGLADESH NEGOTIATORS HAD AGREED IN PRINCIPLE THAT SOME MEDIAN LINE HAD TO BE WORKED OUT. BANGLADESH HAD DROPPED ITS EARLIER CLAIM ON THE "NO GROUND" OFFSHORE TRENCH AS A DEMARCATION MARKER AND HAD RETRACTED FROM ITS INITIAL CLAIM. THE PROBLEM NOW LAY IN DECIDING EXACTLY WHERE THE COMPROMISE MEDIAN LINE WOULD BE PLACED.

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3. DIKSHIT SAID THE DIFFICULTY WAS THAT ALMOST ANY CONCEIVABLE LINE WOULD INVOLVE SLICING AWAY A PORTION OF THE ASHLAND CONCESSION AREA, WHICH THE BANGLADESH GOVT WAS LOATHE TO AGREE TO BECAUSE IT CALLED INTO QUESTION ITS CREDIBILITY ON AN INTERNATIONAL CONTRACT. MOREOVER, GIVEN THE POSSIBILITIES OF OIL ACTUALLY BEING FOUND IN THE AREA, DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS FORCE THE SHEIKH TO BE TENACIOUS IN APPEARING NOT TO GIVE UP TERRITORY OF POTENTIALLY HIGH VALUE. DIKSHIT SAID THE MATTER NOW LAY WITH THE SHEIKH AND PM GANDHI AND HE SIMPLY HAD NO IDEA WHAT WOULD COME NEXT.

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